

Fig. 3 'Ezbet Helmi during the later Second Intermediate Period (Stratum D/3)



Fig. 4 'Ezbet Helmi during the late Second Intermediate Period (Stratum D/2) (after BIETAK *et alii* 2007: fig. 3)

a temple precinct with architectural types deriving both from Egypt and the Ancient Near East surrounded by cemeteries.

The nucleus of the town in the 13th Dynasty was in the south (areas F, A/II, Khata^cna), from there the city spread in all other directions.³³

The town reached its largest extension and first major importance in its historical and urban development when it became the capital of the Hyksos-

realm and thus the northern capital of Egypt covering an area of at least 260 ha.

Town Quarters

Area A/II remained a centre for temples and cemeteries. At least the main temple, Temple III, was in use until early Dynasty 18 (Tuthmoside Period).³⁴

During the early and later Hyksos periods while the administrative centre and residential areas were

³³ The area south of Khata^cna has never been investigated properly. In the West the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile forms a natural border. The area to its West has scarcely been explored. In a

salvage excavation at 'Ezbet el-Baraisa a Late Roman bathing installation was found, Dorner personal communication.
³⁴ V. MÜLLER; 2001: 175.

situated in area F, a palace with an agglutinating room concept was in use. The orientation of this palace is exactly the same as that within the Palace district of the 18th Dynasty (‘Ezbet Helmi). This palace was founded earlier, most probably already in the 13th dynasty, and abandoned during the middle of the Hyksos Period (Stratum D/3). The palace of the late Hyksos Period has yet to be found.³⁵

To the North of the palace scarce traces of a temple were discovered.

To the west, in areas H/I–VI, the site was occupied during the later Second Intermediate Period (Stratum D/3) (Fig. 3).

Small buildings and attached domestic installations like ovens could be found.³⁶ During the late Hyksos Period (Stratum D/2) the settlement pattern changed distinctively (Fig. 4).

The area became more official in character. A large fortification wall with bastions protected the northern part of the town towards the Nile River. It can certainly be addressed as city wall.³⁷ A second city wall, perhaps part of the same installation, was found in ‘Ezbet Rushdi.³⁸ In the north-west the area was filled in in order to elevate the building ground,³⁹ an enclosure wall and adjoining buildings were erected,⁴⁰ the most prominent feature being a platform with casemates.⁴¹



Fig. 5 Temple of Sutech in area A

³⁵ See beneath.

³⁶ BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 30–31, 48, figs. 8–9.

³⁷ BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 33, fig. 12.

³⁸ Forstner-Müller/Müller/Schweitzer/Weissl 2004.

³⁹ BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 31–32, 48, fig. 12.

⁴⁰ A similar fortification wall, separating the North Riverside Palace from the rest of the town was found at Amarna (KEMP 2006, 284, footnote 70, fig. 103).

⁴¹ Labeled „citadel“ by the excavators. BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001.

The precinct extends to the west where a structure with a mudbrick pavement and parts of another building were excavated.⁴² Between the outer and inner enclosure the area was used as a garden. The large mansions to the south were built during the same time and separated from the non-elite-quarters to the west by a large wall.

The spacious settlement-pattern in this part is in big contrast to the South where the site was densely settled. Houses, silos and ovens, built on top of each other form a complicated stratigraphy.⁴³ Most probably the outskirts of a suburban quarter are emerging in this area.

Due to its importance – at this time Avaris was certainly a royal residence – the town expanded not only to the west but also to the north. Suburban quarters could be discerned by excavation (area A/V)⁴⁴ and geomagnetic survey. Probably because of the lack of land suitable for building the sacral area in A/II was then partly used as domestic space and tombs were erected in between and beneath houses.⁴⁵

Temples (Fig. 5)

The famous Sutech temple district can be localized in the area around the excavation house (A). From this temple only a small part has been excavated, two enclosure walls dating into the New Kingdom,⁴⁶ walls inside the enclosed district and offering pits were investigated by archaeological excavations, pylons of the temple were found in a geophysical survey.⁴⁷ A cult for Sutech, Lord of Avaris, is already attested during the late Middle Kingdom.⁴⁸ The first archaeological evidence for the construction of the main Sutech temple consists of several offering pits which were found within this precinct and date into the later Second Intermediate Period⁴⁹ (Fig. 6). During the New Kingdom the temple was enlarged and replaced the neighbouring older houses dating to the Hyksos Period.⁵⁰

To its east in area A/II the Syro-Palestinian/Egyptian sacral precinct flourished. It remained as a centre of religious activity and constituted a nucleus of the town's collective identity until the early 18th Dynasty.



Fig. 6 Offering pit in the Sutech temple district

In Area F/I remains of a small temple with offering pits in its courtyard were discovered⁵¹ (Fig. 7).

Palaces (Fig. 8)

A large complex of agglutinating rooms and courtyards covers the area to the north of the modern village of Khatacna in Area F/II. There is little doubt that this complex is a palace, either for a prince or even for the ruler of Avaris.

The general plan, generated by a combination of geomagnetic survey and archaeological excavation⁵² shows two main districts (A and B–D).

The southern part of district A consists of four rooms, three of them, [L23, L55, L59], of equal size

⁴² BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 49–50, fig. 13.

⁴³ BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, FORSTNER-MÜLLER *et alii* 2008.

⁴⁴ HEIN/JÁNOSI 2004.

⁴⁵ BIETAK 1979b: 266–268, fig. 17; 1986: 49–54; FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2002: 148–149, 2008: 31–34; HEIN/JÁNOSI 2004: 133–141, Abb. 99–103.

⁴⁶ BIETAK 1979b: 268–271, fig. 18; 1990 fig. 4

⁴⁷ FORSTNER-MÜLLER/MÜLLER 2006.

⁴⁸ BECKERATH 1964: 84–85, 153, 160–164; BIETAK 1990: 14.

⁴⁹ The pottery within these pits is typical for the later Second Intermediate Period. For the dating of these pits I am indebted to Karin Kopetzky.

⁵⁰ BIETAK 1979b: 268–269.

⁵¹ Only the back part of its architecture still exists, the rest of the building is destroyed, V. MÜLLER; 2001: Abb. 5.

⁵² BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER/HERBICH 2006; BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006.

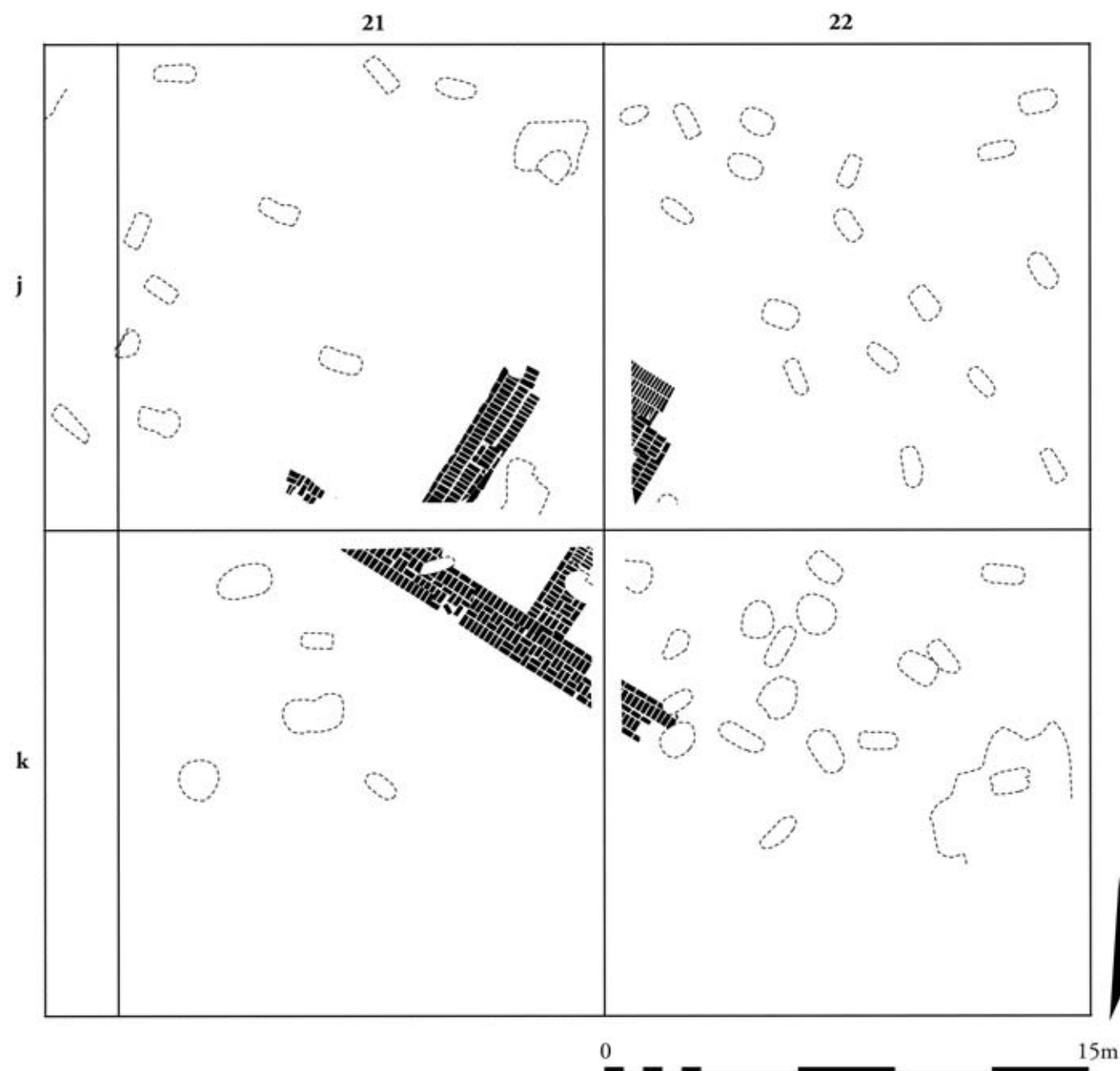


Fig. 7 Small temple of the Second Intermediate Period in area F/I

(ca. 11.7×2.5 m), the fourth, most north-western one, was significantly smaller [L12] (8.9×1.58 m). They are connected doorways. The central room is accessible from the North. A cluster of several rooms more to the north have side walls significantly more narrow than rooms L23,55,59 and 12). Building A was most probably used for offices and magazines.

The districts B–D are not as clearly defined as district A. C and D were at least for some time used as

courtyards. District B consists of several rooms with unknown functions.

In the latest phase of A and B they are connected to each other via a tower.

The architectural features are following rather Ancient Near Eastern than Egyptian traditions.

While the date of its foundation⁵³ is still unknown the abandonment of the palace can be dated to the Middle of the Hyksos Period (Stratum D/3).⁵⁴

⁵³ Only one season of excavation has been undertaken until now, further research will shed more light on this topic.

⁵⁴ The time of abandonment can be determined by a huge pit which cuts into the palace s. BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006: 74–77, Abb. 11–14; iidem 2007.

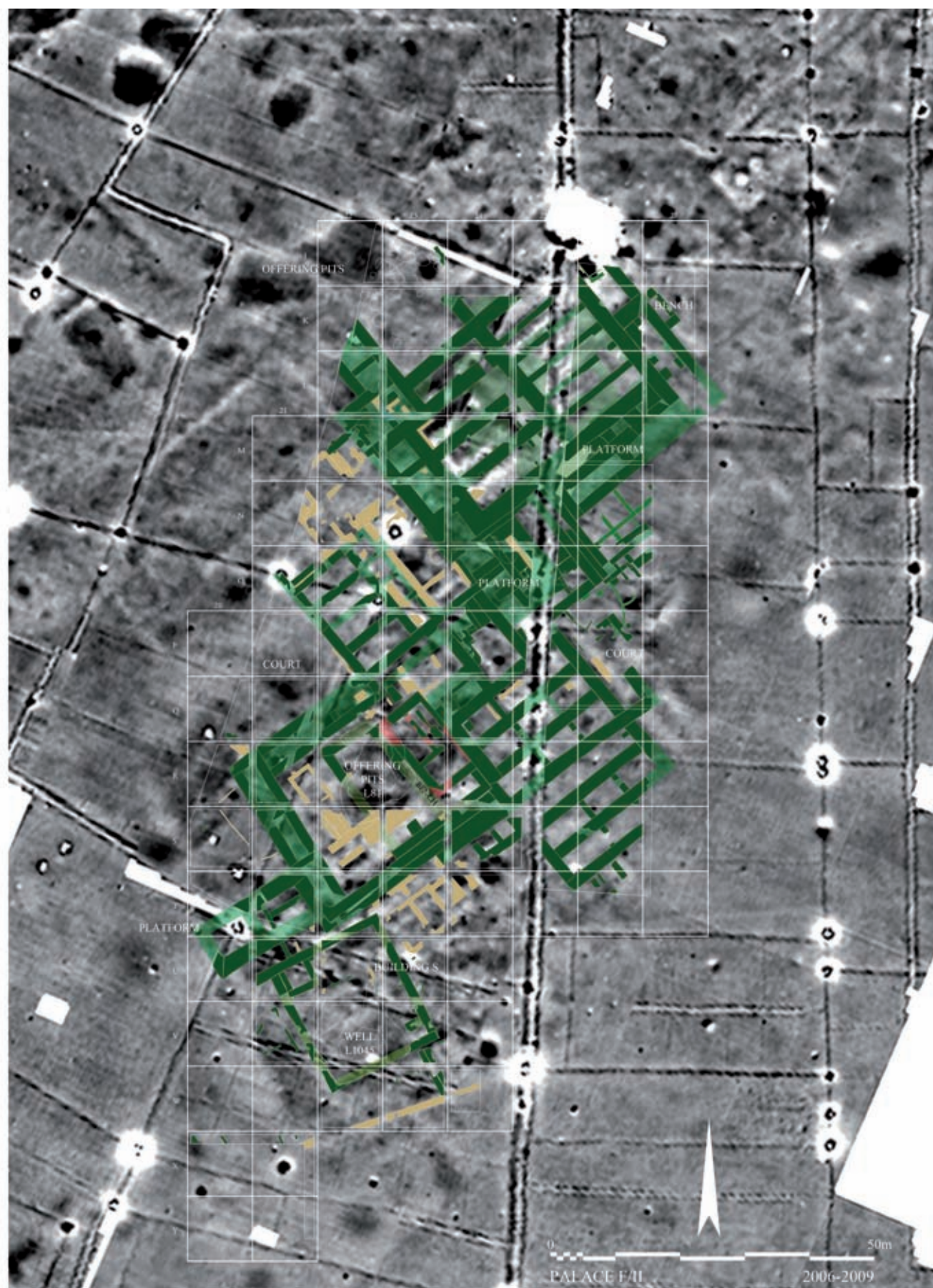


Fig. 8 Palace district of the 15th Dynasty in area F/II

The Palace of the late Second Intermediate Period has not been located yet. Maybe it is situated between the 18th dynasty structures in 'Ezbet Helmi and the palace of F/II. Unfortunately this area is heavily destroyed by the Didamun channel and the modern road. To the west of the Didamun Canal a structure with casemates was found beneath layers of the New Kingdom, however the orientation is different to that of the palace in F/II and the Tuthmoside Palatial district.⁵⁵

Prominent buildings

Installations inside the inner fortification wall (Fig. 4)

During the later Hyksos Period (Stratum D/2) a building with casemates, Platform C, was erected in area H/III. Its dimensions are app. 60 × 52 cubits. Only the lower part could be discerned, the upper part had been dismantled already.⁵⁶

To the west of the platform another building was attached. The western part measuring 24.15 × 7.35 m (46 × 14 cubits) was paved with mud bricks and has been interpreted as an open courtyard.⁵⁷ The width of the walls, however, seems to hint more to a room covered by a vault.⁵⁸ Perhaps this building functioned as a storage room or magazine.⁵⁹ Its dimensions fit perfectly into the Egyptian cubit system with 52 × 38 cubits.

Another building to the west separated by a street from the platform shows that the precinct extends further in this direction.⁶⁰

Beneath this street water supply systems lead from the North to the South. The water conduit was elaborately constructed with reused limestone blocks from the Memphite region.⁶¹

All these structures are enclosed to the North by a large wall of 6 cubit's width which is slightly bent and attached either to a bastion or a tower.⁶²

This precinct runs parallel to the fortification wall in a distance of exactly 300 cubits.⁶³

The buildings are aligned in an angle of app. 90 degrees to the casemate building. Presumably those structures constitute a peripheral part of the palace district of the late Second Intermediate Period (Stratum D/2).⁶⁴

Mansions in the West (Fig. 4)

In the late Second Intermediate Period (Stratum D/2) an enclosure wall was erected to the west of the platform district. It leads in a slightly obtuse angle from the city wall in the North. This wall separates two town quarters:

The eastern part with the garden and mansions in the South can be seen as a living quarter for the elite. At least two mansions of significant size are aligned along the wall. In the West, outside this walled district, more modest quarters can be localised⁶⁵ The investigated part of the quarter reaches a length of 50m and is certainly extending to the north and south. Some of the original surfaces have survived. The floors of the rooms were often paved with sandy mud bricks.

It is remarkable that the orientation of this quarter resembles the one of the earlier palace in F/II (abandoned in D/3).

Suburban Quarters

Outside the two main precincts of the town – the residential area and the sacral/temple area – the extensive suburban areas were located. These could be attested in A/V,⁶⁶ in 'Ezbet Rushdi North and South, and H/VI-South.

As space became rare, districts formerly only used as funerary space (A/II) became now, at least partly, living quarters⁶⁷ (Fig. 9, 10a–c).

In these parts there is no master plan visible with in the organization of space. Houses, courtyards and other installations are arranged in an arbitrary manner. Streets divide the area into smaller sections without any regular grid like that typical of the planned

⁵⁵ BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER; 2008: 36–37, fig. 2. For the time being it can only be attested that these features are predating the New Kingdom. Further excavations will shed light on its precise dating.

⁵⁶ For a detailed description and a hypothetical reconstruction cf. BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 49–50, fig. 13.

⁵⁷ BIETAK/DORNER, in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 50.

⁵⁸ The width of this building allows a vault, even broader rooms were vaulted s. a span of 8.6m in the Royal stables of Medinet Habu, SPENCER 1979: 125.

⁵⁹ For this suggestion I am grateful to M. Bietak.

⁶⁰ This part could not be excavated as the modern village is built on top of it.

⁶¹ BIETAK/DORNER in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 4955, fig. 14a–c. A similar water supply system, also with limestone blocks covered by a mud coat, was found in the South of 'Ezbet Helmi BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008: 36, 53, figs. 31–33. This, however, was built in the New Kingdom.

⁶² BIETAK/DORNER in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 49.

⁶³ BIETAK/DORNER in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 48.

⁶⁴ S. above.

⁶⁵ BIETAK/DORNER in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 33.

⁶⁶ HEIN/JÁNOSI 2004.

⁶⁷ BIETAK 1979b: 266–268.

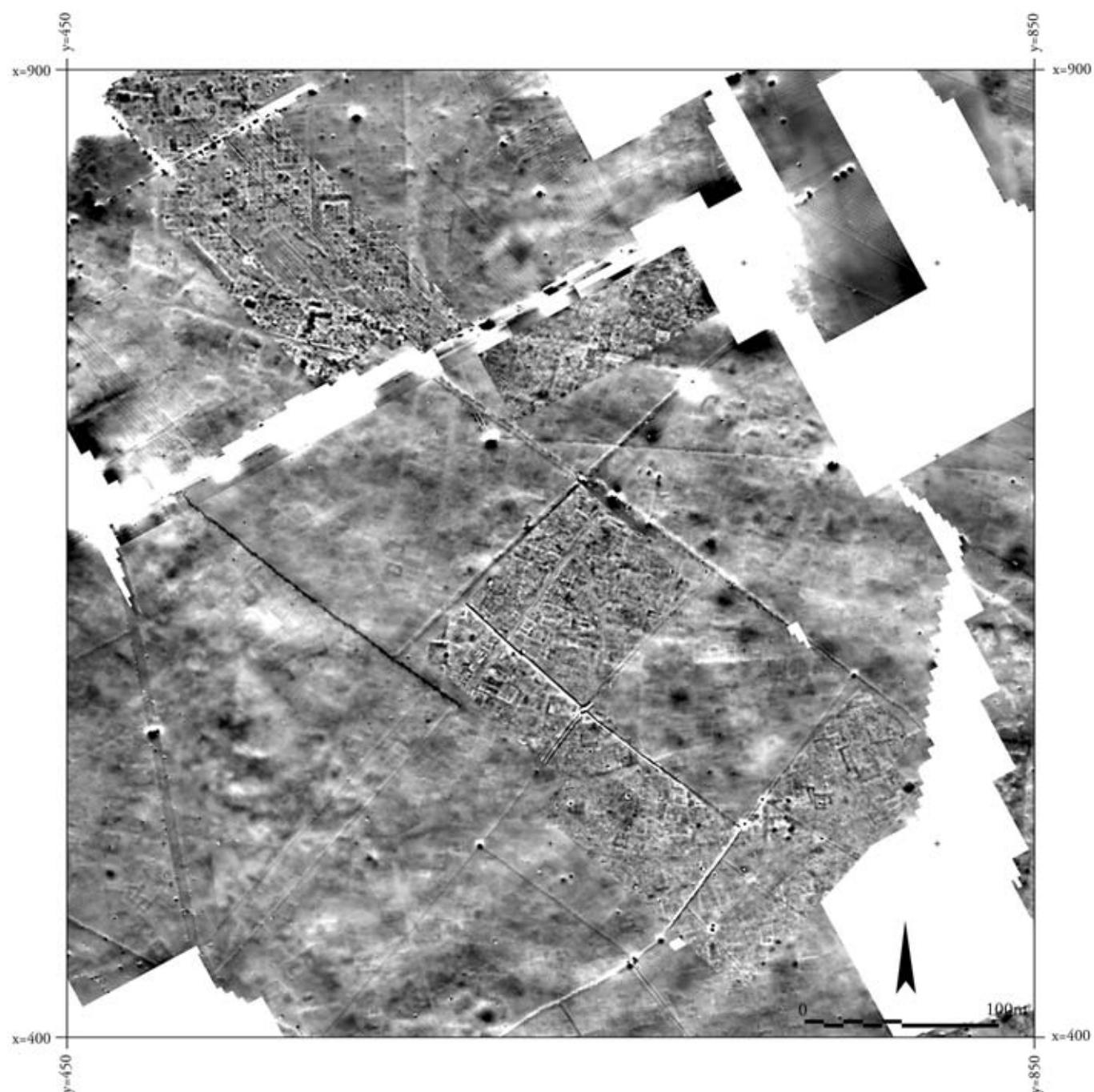
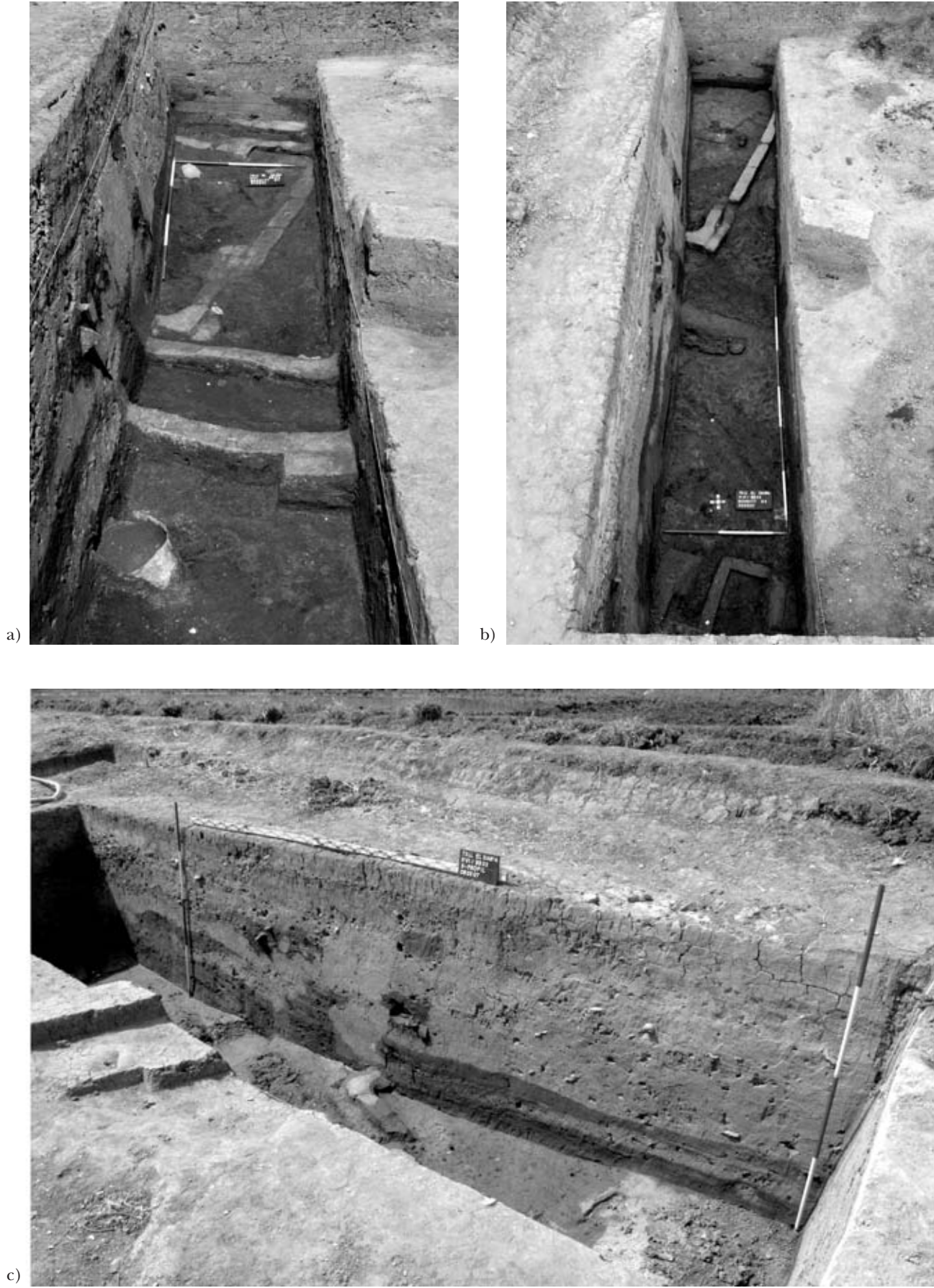


Fig. 9 Magnetic image of the Second Intermediate Period town quarter at 'Ezbet Rushdi

settlements of the Middle Kingdom. In the North a massive fortification wall protected the town towards the Nile River. There the Second Intermediate Period town is built on top of the Middle Kingdom settlement of 'Ezbet Rushdi. Whereas the Rushdi settlement is built directly at the Nile the Second Intermediate Period town keeps a distinct distance from the

river. The reasons for that change in settlement pattern are not clear; perhaps the distance was a necessary precaution in order to protect the houses from the threats of the yearly inundation as the behaviour of the river became more and more unpredictable because of the severed lines of communication with the South.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ FORSTNER-MÜLLER/MÜLLER; 2005



10a-c Settlement of the Second Intermediate Period in 'Ezbet Helmi

Cemeteries (Fig. 11)

The absence of any strict distinction between living and burial space in most parts of Avaris is a striking feature. This is especially valid for the later phase of the Hyksos Empire when the town increased and the population size exploded. Even in Area A/II which had always been a favourite place for a burial ground, the space was used as a living quarter with tombs integrated into domestic architecture in stratum D/2.

In A/IV the layers of this period are nearly completely destroyed.

In F/I tombs were placed around the temple during Stratum E/1.⁶⁹ Whether this part was purely a cemetery or a living quarter with houses and attached tombs during the 15th Dynasty remains unclear because of the complete destruction of above-ground structures.

In the suburb A/V, tombs were erected among houses and later (Stratum D/2) as parts of houses.

In 'Ezbet Helmi single burials put into shallow pits were found in between the other buildings,⁷⁰ tombs with architecture had been heavily destroyed by building activities of later periods. Tombs of the late Second Intermediate Period were also discovered at 'Ezbet Gayel.⁷¹

City walls (Fig. 12)

Second Intermediate Period Avaris was a heavily fortified city. In the Northwest the town was enclosed by a massive wall (A) of (app. 6,2 m wide) which sloped towards the outer part.⁷² The same wall, visible in the magnetometer image,⁷³ extended towards the east and is at least 280 m long. Another part of the town enclosure (B) can be seen, also detected by means of magnetometry, in the north-east of the town at the modern village of 'Ezbet Rushdi. This massive fortification cuts into the planned settlement of the Middle

Kingdom.⁷⁴ The wall is app. 6m wide, as wide as the Northwestern wall, and can be traced for 290m.

There is no doubt that these walls are meant for defence. The threats to Avaris were realistic not perceived.⁷⁵ As we know from historical sources the Second Intermediate Period was not a time of peace but a time of struggle for power between the Hyksos kings of the 15th Dynasty in the North and their Theban counterparts in the South.⁷⁶ It goes without saying that these defence walls also served ideological purposes by demonstrating Royal Power and the symbolic control over the area.

Harbours (Fig. 1)

Avaris was, by the Second Intermediate Period, an important trading centre and a major harbour for seagoing ships. This is not only known to us from textual sources⁷⁷ but also becomes evident in the enormous amount of imports, mainly storage vessels from the Levant and pottery from Cyprus.⁷⁸ Even as late as the 20th Dynasty Avaris was known as a toponym for the part of Per-Ramesses where the harbour was to be localised.⁷⁹

Furthermore the town was also a military stronghold where the troops of the Hyksos rulers were stationed. Thus several harbours serving both military and civil purposes are to be expected. A geophysical survey in 2007⁸⁰ showed three possible locations for harbours.⁸¹

1. Harbour 1 was localised to the east of the modern Islamic cemetery in the area of a depression which is sometimes filled with water. The assumed harbour is linked to the flowing river system on both sides: in the West to the main branch of the Nile (F1) by a canal, in the East by a branch which flows into the main branch at 'Ezbet Rushdi. A part of the large basin was overbuilt in later times (perhaps the Late

⁶⁹ For the temple s. above.

⁷⁰ BIETAK/DORNER in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 48, figs. 10, 11; BIETAK/FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008: 38, fig. 6.

⁷¹ HABACHI 2001: 254.

⁷² For a detailed description cf. JÁNOSI 1994: 28–30, figs. 4, 5, there wrongly described as wall of a citadel. Later BIETAK in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001: 48, fig. 12 and 33, rightly as a town wall.

⁷³ BIETAK/DORNER in: BIETAK/DORNER/JÁNOSI 2001, fig. 33.

⁷⁴ Cf. above.

⁷⁵ For enclosure walls seen as an acknowledgement of real or perceived threats s. SPENCE 2004: 269.

⁷⁶ GARDINER 1916, HABACHI 1972. However Kamoses' attack against Avaris was not severe, he devastated part of the hinterland, the town itself stayed intact.

⁷⁷ Cf. the Stela of Kamose where hundreds of ships with goods from the Near East are mentioned, HABACHI 1972: 37, l. 13–15.

⁷⁸ MAGUIRE 1986, 1992, 1994, 1995.

⁷⁹ Inscriptions on naos doors in the Pushkin Museum of Moscow from the Ramesside Period BRUYÈRE 1930: 22; YOYOTTE 1971–72: 172; cf. also BIETAK 1975: 187–188.

⁸⁰ The survey was done by core drillings. This project is a joint effort between the Austrian Archaeological Institute/Cairo Branch and Hervé Tronchère and Jean-Philippe Goiran from the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Université Lyon 2.

⁸¹ The typical sedimentation for harbours was found, archaeological verification is still to be done.



Fig. 11 Syro-Palestinian/Egyptian temple district with cemeteries in area A/II



Fig. 12 Plan with city walls of the Second Intermediate Period

Period).⁸² Although a positive date can not be established this could be one of the harbours of the Second Intermediate Period town.

2. Harbour 2 was detected under another sometimes inundated depression to the north of the modern village of Khata^cna. The only access to the main water system was from the South.⁸³ A canal visible on the western side of the modern road does not continue further to the East. The connection to the palace in F/II⁸⁴ which is situated to the North is evident which makes Harbour 2 a possible harbour and landing place for the residential area at least during the earlier Hyksos period.

3. Harbour 3 is situated next to the modern village of ^cEzbet Yanni at the former Nile branch F2. It was already attested by Josef Dörner⁸⁵ who had found harbour installations there. As branch F2 was in use for a long time the dockyards most probably date from the Second Intermediate to (more likely) the Ramesside period.

3. POPULATION SIZE⁸⁶

Little is known about the population size of ancient Egypt.⁸⁷ The estimated numbers differ significantly. Only two antique sources provide us with information on this topic. The Greek historian DIODORUS (I,31,8)

⁸² The dating is highly speculative as archaeological investigations have yet to be conducted.

⁸³ This part will be investigated in spring 2008.

⁸⁴ Cf. above.

⁸⁵ DÖRNER 1994: fig. 1.

⁸⁶ For the demography in Ancient Egypt cf. the detailed study of Jürgen Kraus (KRAUS 1994).

⁸⁷ The situation for demographic data is slightly better in the Hellenistic-Roman periods. Then we can rely on census papyri as additional sources. On this topic cf. MÜLLER, *this volume*.

gives two figures: a number of 3 million people in the Early Ptolemaic Period, and over 7 million for the time preceding the Persian conquest. Flavius JOSEPHUS (*De bello judaico* II, 16,4 §385) gives 7,5 million people excluding the city of Alexandria. All three figures are heavily debated.⁸⁸

For pharaonic times the sources are even scarcer. Baer on the basis of the agricultural space which was necessary for providing for the Ramesside period estimated 4.5 million people,⁸⁹ later, however, gave a much lower number of 2.4–3.6 million.⁹⁰ Butzer estimated 2 million for the Middle Kingdom and 2.9 million for the beginning of the New Kingdom.⁹¹ Even lower are the figures provided by Fekri Hassan: for the Old Kingdom 1.2 million, for the New Kingdom 2.1 million and for the Graeco-Roman Period 3.2 million.⁹²

The same problem is apparent for estimating the population of Egyptian towns. Although the research focus in Egyptology did change and is not anymore only centred on tombs and temples⁹³ but also on the investigation of cities and urbanism⁹⁴ many sites are still excavated in small parts or only surveyed.⁹⁵ This is especially valid for the capital cities Memphis⁹⁶ and Thebes.⁹⁷ Therefore the figures given for both towns must be regarded with caution. Fekri Hassan gives us a number of 20,000–40,000 persons.⁹⁸ The situation is much better for Amarna where thorough urban investigation has been done. However, even there it is difficult to estimate the population size as overall housing density is different all over the site.⁹⁹ Barry

Kemp, on the basis of numbers of households estimated a population from 20,400 to 28,790, an average of 60 persons/ha.¹⁰⁰

For Tell el-Dab^ca Manfred Bietak proposed an estimate at the beginning of the eighties. He did not use households but took figures derived from the population size of the 19th century A.D.,¹⁰¹ concluding 100 persons/ha. For an estimated size of Avaris of 250 ha in the 15th Dynasty he came to 25,000 persons.¹⁰²

In the meantime the site has been intensively prospected, the idea of its extension has become much clearer. The area which could be settled all over the year covers at least around 260 ha. This estimation does not include the part south of the modern village of Khata^cna where the area has not yet been prospected. Thus it is most probable that further research will give even larger figures for the site.

Therefore the numbers given in the following are a cautious estimation: between 28,835 (5 persons/household) to 34,602 (6 persons/household) for the later 15th Dynasty.¹⁰³ This would mean either 111 persons/ha or 133 persons/ha, a figure which is in the upper scale range of figures given by F. Hassan for a capital.¹⁰⁴ That this population size is higher than at Amarna is not a surprise. It was already mentioned before that Amarna has an extra status.¹⁰⁵

CONCLUSION

After more than 40 years of archaeological work of at Tell el-Dab^ca we are able to distinguish categories of

⁸⁸ For a detailed discussion s. for Diodoros cf. KRAUS 1994: 45–52, for Josephus: KRAUS 1994: 62–66.

⁸⁹ BAER 1962: 43–44.

⁹⁰ Cf. BUTZER 1976: 76.

⁹¹ BUTZER 1976: fig. 13, also KRAUS 1994: 21, Tabelle 1.2.

⁹² HASSAN 1994: 560. All these figures, especially the one for the Greco-Roman period are unconvincingly achieved. For the problem of using data from the time before the industrialization of Egypt cf. KRAUS 2004: 214–232. Due to lack of better methods these data will be used here as well. This topic will be dealt with in extenso with bibliography by W. MÜLLER, *this volume*. This author also gets much higher population figures.

⁹³ See the situation still in the seventies, KEMP 1977 (The Early Development of Towns in Egypt, *Antiquity* 51, 185–200; BIETAK 1979a).

⁹⁴ Besides Tell el-Dab^ca/Qantir and Amarna (KEMP 1981, 1987; KEMP & GARFI 1993.) significant work has been done in Elephantine/Aswan (latest VON PILGRIM same volume) and especially at Giza where the work of Mark Lehner was a breakthrough in understanding settlement and work organization of the Old Kingdom (LEHNER *et alii* 2006).

⁹⁵ S. for instance Sais WILSON 2006.

⁹⁶ For the urban investigation at Memphis s. the work of the EES: GIDDY 1994; GIDDY/JEFFREYS 1986, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993; GIDDY/JEFFREYS/MALEK 1989; JEFFREYS 1985, 1996, 1998, 2001; JEFFREYS/TAVARES 1994, 2000.

⁹⁷ The situation in Luxor is very sad. No urban research has ever been done there on a larger scale. s. KEMP 2006: 225–227, fig. 83, 265–281, fig. 101, pl. 8; AUFRÈRE *et alii* 1991: 72–214.

⁹⁸ HASSAN 1993: 563.

⁹⁹ KEMP 1981: 94.

¹⁰⁰ KEMP 1981: 97.

¹⁰¹ AMAR 1944.

¹⁰² Bietak personal communication.

¹⁰³ These figures are based on Kemp's estimation (KEMP 1991: 94: "One basis for comparison is data from early modern Egypt, copiously presented in the 1917 census. The variation lies between 4 to 7 persons per dwelling, with 5 to 6 to the most common.")

¹⁰⁴ S. above.

¹⁰⁵ HASSAN 1993: 563: "Other Egyptian towns would have been more crowded."

distinctive quarters like sacral precinct, residential area or ordinary living quarters at least in some periods.

Starting as a small community founded by the Egyptian crown to colonize this part of the country the town thrived gradually until, in the 15th Dynasty, Avaris became one of the biggest cities in the Near East and Egypt. During all periods its importance derived from its favourable topographical position, linking Egypt and the Near East, thus maintaining its importance both for military campaigns and trade activities.

The nucleus of the town shifted several times, from the Early Middle Kingdom settlement in the South to the middle 12th Dynasty settlement in the North and then back already in the late Middle Kingdom.

Our modern concept of “down town” and suburban areas cannot be applied, some parts are more densely settled than others but a centre in our understanding is not recognizable.¹⁰⁶

Although we do have a general idea how the town was organised the presented data only allows a glimpse at the whole picture and needs a lot of future research.

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¹⁰⁶ This seems to be a characteristic of Egyptian towns.

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